

Tradition of martyrdom in Sikh culture- Elusive Shahids

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Abstract

The paper discusses the political shift in tradition of heroism and martyrdom in Sikhism in early 20th century Punjab. Sikhism focused on religious brotherhood open to all irrespective of caste and creed had a spirit of sacrifice, as Sikh tradition has long list of Shahids or martyrs, from Guru Arjan to Guru Tegh Bahadur including Sahibzadas in Medieval period, till in modern times Akali martyrs of Gurudwara reform movement, have been fairly highlighted in "*Panth*" history. The paper represented two case studies- The *Ghadar* and Jallianwala Bagh associated with popular Indian National Movement, these did not enjoyed much reverence and relevance in popular Sikh martyr traditions, strangely enough, these movements bear testimony of Sikh tradition of supreme sacrifice for the cause of Sikh Panth. The nationalist overtones of the movements founded base for Akali struggle in Gurudwara reform movement in Punjab.

Keywords: *Shahids, Martyr, Kukas, Panth, Akalis, Ghadarites, Komagatmaru, Ghadar, Gurudawara.*

INTRODUCTION

Martyrdom or voluntarily laying down of one's life for one's faith. Thus a martyr or shahid is one who by his supreme sacrifice for his faith bears witness to its truth. Among Sikhs due to historical process the term Shahid became common in referring to the sacrifices of all those who fell while serving their faith .¹

In holy Sikh scripture, Guru Granth hymns are found which clearly express to true devotee, not to shirk from making the supreme sacrifice for holy cause. Guru Nanak in a context offers,

"Jo ke prem Khilan ka chaav

¹ .Gurcharan Singh Talib:concept of Sikhism, pp 279-80, Sudrshan Publications, Amritsar, 1982

*.This paper was presented at seminar "Modernization of Sikh Culture in 21st century " at SGND Khalsa College(University of Delhi), Dev Nagar, Karol Bagh.Held under auspices of Political Science Department on 21st, March, 2015.

Sir dhar tali gali mori aao" {GGS:1412}

Those who have spirit to sacrifice only come to me

Kabir, whose compositions are preserved in Guru Granth, portrays the spirit of heroism, by composing thus:

"Gagan Dhamma Bajeyo

Jo lare din ke hate" {GGS:891}

Recall for sacrifice of oneself for the just cause

Guru Gobind, the tenth Guru, in a prayer sought the blessings of laying down life in battlefield, fighting to defend righteousness.²

To recall sacrifices of martyrs in course of Sikh history as a part of Sikh tradition, while offering "*Ardas*" or daily supplicatory prayer morning and evening, as a matter of fact at all times, Shahids are mentioned in the context along with faithful followers of Guru. To mention some portion of Sikh history this term is applied to twin sacrifices of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Among other martyrs are Guru Gobind's four sons and many others who have sacrificed lives in medieval period, by it Martyrdom or *Shadaat* became integral part of Sikh sacrificial tradition.³

Socio-religious reform movement in Punjab during 19th century and Sikh responses:

The annexation of Punjab by British in 1849, heralded a period of modernization, British were anxious to provide stability in region due to Afghan and Russian danger in the proximity of Punjab border. So as a policy matter British try to placate the Sikhs who were the sovereigns rulers of Punjab, Sikh animosity towards British was natural, as they were disposed by them, Sikh masses generally and Intelligentsia particularly looked down them as usurper of Sikh power. The Sikhs were assured for their loyalty towards *Raj*, large numbers of disbanded *Khalsa* army soldiers were re-recruited in Company's army, Lands were allotted to Sikh Peasantry, Sikh shrines were returned to community and confiscated property of various Sikh institutions were relocated to the original grantees. This policy paid handsomely to British during 1857 rebellion in Northern and Eastern India, Punjab's armies sides with company's army and even provided necessary support in quelling the rebellion.⁴

².Sadbardh Guru Granth Sahib(English translation) pp, 516-17, GNDU press, Amritsar, 1969.

³.Lakshman Singh Bhagat:Sikh Martyrs, pp 83-84, Madaras, Amrita Publications, 1928.

⁴.ibid:pp, 86-87.

The policy of appeasement continued after Mutiny years, Government favored the Sikhs, reconstruction programme resumed, public works such development Canal Colonies, reclamation of desert land in doab between Punjab rivers. The Sikhs were given preference in colonizing these barren lands, soon Sikhs became most prosperous peasantry in Asia. So it was not surprising that they become staunchest supporters of *Raj*.⁵

As British rule hasten the process of social and economic modernization, it also eroded the inter community relationship between major communities of Punjab, The Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. The massive number of religious movements evolved, it brought up new challenges. The development of many institutions strengthen community solidarity and religious revivalism. The socio-religious reform organizations among Hindus such as Brahmo Samaj, Dev Samaj, Hindu Sabhas and Arya Samaj and among Muslims such as Anjumans, Ahmediya sect posed serious challenge to Sikh faith, in addition to these revivalist movements, Christian Missionary launched their conversion movement, *SPG* and *Probestrian Mission* convert many lower classes to their faith, even Sikh lower classes like Mahjabis were also converted to Christianity. The census figures of 1881 and 1891 indicated sharp increase in Christian population of Punjab.⁶ These development led to the anxiety among Sikh intelligentsia. The community earlier had two revivalist movements in 1860s and 1870s namely *Nirankaris* and *Namdharis* which aimed at revival of pure "*Khalsa*" tradition and ceremonials rites as different from *Hindus* altogether. By 1872, Namdhari movement got radicalized and pose serious law and order problem in Punjab thus suppressed brutally by the British authorities.⁷

The Sikh intelligentsia wanted to counter this challenge in liberal and moderate way, they decided to launch self-strengthening movement through which they could manage to counter the challenge of revivalist and Missions and may aspire for separate identity for the community in Punjab. The discussions were organized at many places finally it was decided that a reformist organization to be founded which could become centre of reformist activities. So in 1873 first "*Singh Sabha*" was founded at Amritsar later schism resulted in founding of another *Singh Sabha* at Lahore in 1880, the major objectives of the *Singh Sabha's* were restoration of pure *Khalsa* faith, organization of Sikh educational conference to disseminate the ideology, publication of books related to Sikh history and Punjabi language and most importantly to cultivate loyalty to British Crown. By 1885-86 a Sikh press and a "*Khalsa tract Society*" was also formed to motivate the young Sikh Scholars, this period of Sikh resurgence in Punjab was finally completed by, 1899, when a new revivalist body "*Khalsa Diwan*" and "*Khalsa College*" was founded

⁵ .Khawja Sarfraz Hussain: Sikhs of Punjab 1900-1915: a study of confrontation and political mobilization, pp 14-15, unpublished thesis, university of Missouri, Columbia, US, 1980.

⁶ .ibid:pp, 20-21.

⁷ .ibid:pp, 24-25.

at Amritsar. The major achievement of this period was that reformers were able to achieve support from Sikh community for modernization of the faith and reformers too got support from the Government in Punjab, the loyalist stance of Sikh community earned reward in form of massive Army recruitment of the Sikhs of Doab region. So goodwill and rapprochement was cemented between community and the Government.⁸

At the advent of 20th century this relationship between community and *Raj* get more strong, it patronized this relationship as Punjab was the key to control the Afghanistan and Russian expansion, it serve as the major recruiting centre for the Army, Muslim Pathans and Sikhs were the favorites choice for the recruitments by 1920s , 3/4th of British army was comprised of Punjab soldiers' majority of them were Sikhs of Doab region and Muslims of North- West area of Punjab. The Sikhs realized patronage of *Raj* was critical to achieve separate religious and cultural identity, majority of Sikhs believed that British rule came as blessings for them. So on many occasion solidarity with *Raj* was shown keenly, for instance, *Queen Empress* birthday was celebrated with much pomp and show in 1900 at *Gurudwara Janam Asthan* , Lahore. Similarly B victory in Boer war was again celebrated with much fanfare at *Gurudwara* at Amritsar.⁹

So between 1900-1918, the relationship between Sikhs and *Raj* remained that of patron and client, the Sikhs loyalty towards *Raj* was very priced for British in war period, as on many war fronts Punjab's soldiers fought decisive battles for British, large numbers of them were Sikh soldiers from Doab area. So it was the situation of Punjab in early 20th century, the general public in Punjab was satisfied with *Raj*, all major communities were reeling under the so called concept of *Pax- Britannica* or British peace a very popular hypothesis of that phase, which credited the British rule for establishment of peace in India.¹⁰

Punjabi emigration and development of political consciousness in North America and Canada: The wave of emigration from rural areas of central Punjab to North America began due to economic reasons. The large numbers of Punjabis especially Sikhs have earlier moved to other foreign lands in search of employment in region Malaya, Hongkong, Thailand, Sumatra, Manila. The discovery of better economic opportunities in North America and Canada due to industrial development resulted in massive emigration from rural Punjab, Moreover, by 1904-05, it was also boosted by encouragement given by Hongkong agents of Canadian steamship companies.¹¹

⁸ .ibid:pp, 26-27.

⁹ .ibid:pp, 34-35.

¹⁰ .ibid:pp, 36-37.

¹¹ .Harish K Puri:Ghadar movement ideology , organization, strategy pp, 78, GNDU press, 1993.

All these immigrants came mainly from five districts of eastern Punjab-viz- Amritsar, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar and Ambala, largest chunk came from Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur region 90% of them were Sikhs. They found employment in laying the track of Canadian Pacific Railways, in Lumber mills etc. Although the wages were lower as compared to white workers, but they managed to save for the families in India and send money to home which encouraged other relatives and friends to join them. The pattern of settlement varies according to immigrants density region wise, the 90% of immigrants who went to Canada settled in British Columbia and 90% who had been to North America settled in California.¹²

The vast majority of Indian Migrants were Sikhs, they were in great demand for the labor work. The community was well- organized, the Sikh shrines *Gurudawaras* were the centre of immigrants activities. In 1907 a religious society *Khalsa Diwan* was set up at Vancouver, Canada to coordinate the Immigrants needs. The branches of society were opened Victoria, Abbotsford, New Westminster, Ocean Falls. The society also built a *Gurudwara* at Victoria, these centers usually acted as "Employment Bureau" for immigrants. The society also established its branches at USA and built a *Gurudwara* at Stockton, it also served as the recruiting centre for the immigrants in USA. Although objective of the society was religious and philanthropic but it also addressed the problems of immigrants and worked for their welfare.¹³

All these developments led to increase in number of immigrants, by 1906, there were about 1600 Sikh workers in Canada. In North America their number were about 5000 by 1908. The newcomers were well looked by their fellows, the free community kitchens run by *Gurudawaras* solved the food and lodging issues. But, problem emerged soon in Canada and USA for these immigrants, the local white workers Unions resented the entry of Asian emigrants into their respective countries, So governments were forced to pass the anti-emigration legislations to assuage their Unions, the law passed by these countries were unfavorable to Indian emigrants. Although, all Indian emigrants were the British subject and had legal right to settle in Canada, as it too was the part of governed British territory but legislation passed by Canadian parliament set aside these claims and Government in India too supported the enactment of these stringent laws against the emigration. The Punjabi emigrants were the worst sufferers, they resented the attitude of Government of India, even harsh deportation law was enacted against the wishes of these emigrants, it created the disaffection against British rule generally and Canadian authorities particularly.¹⁴

The disillusionment of Punjabi emigrants resulted in disorientation towards *Raj*. It had disastrous effect on morale of Sikhs, the community usually praised the

¹² .ibid:pp, 84-85

¹³ .ibid:pp, 104-05.

¹⁴ .ibid:pp, 109-10.

benevolence of *Raj* and believed in steadfast loyalty towards *Raj*. The continued support of Indian government towards USA and Canadian legislations further alienated the migrants many of them now attracted towards radical nationalist propaganda of revolutionary organizations established by Indians in UK and USA.¹⁵

Emergence and impact of *GHADAR* movement among Punjabi Diaspora:

The establishment of *Ghadar party* in USA attribute its foundation to revolutionary spirit in overseas empires of British. The political liberal environment of USA provided base for the dissemination of revolutionary ideals. The emigrants by first decade of 20th century had lost much of their faith in British fair-play. Some of these immigrants mostly young Punjabi Sikhs and Hindus who were semi-literate, paid attention to the revolutionary speeches of leaders who visited Canada and USA. The themes of these speeches revolves anti –British sentiments and call for end of evil rule in India by armed struggle, exhorted by visiting speakers, such platform was provided by the local immigrant body, first of its kind was founded in 1909 namely "*Hindustani association or Hindi Sabha*" at Vancour, Canada. The meetings were usually held on monthly basis, fiery speeches were delivered but attendees were not moved much and it did not caught up the imaginations. By, 1912, mood was very vibrant, the situation in Europe was very alarming, the Balkan problem had set the stage for Great War.

In India the success of revolutionary movement in Bengal, UP and Punjab had major effect on the perception of migrants, a general sense prevails in case of war between major powers, a possibility of imminent revolution be there in India but idea was not yet ripened. The beginning was made by Lala Hardyal, a revolutionary of Delhi, who was a teacher at Stanford University , by 1912, Hardyal began to deliver lectures on Indian political problem. He was emphatically influenced by another Indian revolutionary Vir Sarvarkar, in his lecture series he mooted the idea of armed revolution in India on the lines of 1857 revolt with help of Indian soldiers of British Army. During this time "*Delhi bomb case*" of 23rd December, 1912 raised the spirits of revolutionaries, Hardyal, glorify the incident and admire the event through his speeches and articles, this enthusiasm awaken the opportunity of organizing a revolutionary movement in India.¹⁶

Lala Hardyal , soon become a political mentor of the immigrants. In January , 1913, he took initiative in organizing the immigrants at Stockton-USA set up a body called the "*Hindustani Workers of Pacific Coast*" the organization bought premises in San-Francisco and began publishing a weekly newspaper-*Gadar* in Urdu literally

¹⁵ .ibid:pp, 114-15.

¹⁶ .ibid:pp, 116-17.

meaning Revolution , later in many other Indian languages-like Hindi, Urdu, Gujrati, Bengali and largest circulation being in Punjabi language. Threafter, the organization came to be known as "*Gadar or Ghadar*" party with having objective of armed revolution in India on lines of 1857 mutiny with help of Indian soldiers of British Indian Army .¹⁷ The militant and revolutionary overtones of party was witnessed in its publications, it formed the permanent committee, ¹⁸ to carry forward its propaganda work in India and abroad.¹⁹

In terms of organization it collected more than 10 lakh rupee in one day on April, 21, 1913.the very first day of party meeting, within few months *Gadar* paper began to circulate among Indian settlers in Canada, USA, Phillipines, Japan, China and Hongkong. The copies of paper also reached in British Guinea, Trinidad, South and East Africa. Many articles and poems from the *Gadar* were reprinted as booklets four of which became very popular.²⁰

The themes of all *Gadar* poetic and prose verses were revolutionary, written in simple and ornate style, these stress to patch up all communal differences, explained the deficiencies of *Raj*, its continuation in India was regarded as unlawful. So it was pointed out British rule in India should be wiped out violently by revolution with help of Indian soldiers. The readers were encouraged to contribute in this holy objective, the Sikh Martial traditions of sacrifice and valor were euogolised to achieve the plan. Soon the Great War commence in Europe, party realized that is the best opportunity to strike in India, members hoped, British insolent in war may be helpful for revolutionary in India. A final plan was executed by which a batch of revolutionary will sail towards India and sneaked into interiors of Punjab and contact the Indian soldiers in cantonments and provoke them to join the revolution, members were hopeful of their imminent success.²¹

¹⁷ .This idea actually floated by Veer Sarvarkar at India House , London, a hotspot of revolutionary activities in UK, in one of meeting, after his detention other revolutionaries migrated to US, Lala Hardyal was one of them who promoted this very idea during his lecture series at California meetings endorsed by Ram Chandra, Bhai Parmanand and Tundliyat. Quoted in Appendix;IX-X, Harish K Puri

¹⁸ .These were the founding members of *Ghadar* party:Sohan Singh Bhakana, President:Kesar Singh and Jawala Singh, Vice Presidents:Lala Hardyal, who also was the editor of Urdu edition of *Gadar*, General Secretary:Pandit Kanshi Ram, Treasurer:Munshi Ram, Organising Secretary, besides it, other active members were:Kartar Singh sarabha who edited Punjabi edition of *Gadar*, Ram Chandra who later took the post of General Secretary after departure of Lala Hardyal, Harnam Singh Tundliyat, Karim Baksh, G.D Vashist and Bhai Parmanand.Quoted in Appendix;IX-X, Harish K Puri.

¹⁹ .Harish K Puri:Ghadar Movemnt:Appendix ;IX-X.

²⁰ .These four booklets whose copies were smuggled to various parts of countries, where immigrant population resides.These were in vernaculars such as Punjabi, having largest circulation, in addition, Urdu and Hindi also very popular, 1.Ghadar-di-goonj (Punjabi) echoes of mutiny. 2.Angrezi raj- da- Kaccha Chittha(Punjabi) balance sheet of British rule in India.3.Naya Zamana(Urdu) the new age.4.Ilan-e- jung(Urdu) declaration of war. Quoted in Appendix IX-X, Harish K Puri.

²¹ .Harish K Puri:Ghadar Movement:pp, 197-98.

Ghadarite's World View : Soon after establishment of *Gadar* party, an incident drew the attention of world to plight of Indian Immigrants in Canada. It fuelled the emotionally surcharged situation among immigrants. This incident popularly known as Komagataru (name of Japanese ship) incident, the arrival of it in Canadian waters in 1914.²²

The Punjabi immigrants who participated in this movement had no illusion about their success, on declaration of Great War in Europe in July –August 1914, a series of public lectures were held, these were addressed by passionate volunteers, they invoked sacrificial traditions of *Khalsa Panth* to wage a holy war against British rule, however common theme was the overthrow of evil rule from India and establishment of a just democratic society was proposed, the armed revolution was the basic motto, it was exhorted that Great War had given opportunity, *Ghadarites* must take advantage of this precious moment. The many of the volunteers thought there would be lot of arms with Indian soldiers, they, could be won over easily by nationalist propaganda to their cause. These volunteers expected to find their Indian counterpart in state of readiness, an self-made image of their own subjective desires. So many of them decided to move secretly to India to fulfill the desire to free India, it was their self-idealism which emotionally connect to them with this holy cause.²³

In their World-view *Ghadarites* were influenced by anti-imperialist struggles in Contemporary World, they were inspired by the revolutionary movements in Russia, China, Mexico, Ireland and Egypt. The idealism and enthusiasm of *Ghadarites* resulted in over-estimation of their objective. The organizational structure was entirely based on individual leader's personality, leadership in later stages could not cope with ground realities. They focused on individual action, heroism and sacrificial spirit but they were hardly in possession of weapons, relied only on Indian soldiers for armed rebellion. The *Ghadarites* usually boast of 1857 type like win-win situation in India, and did not expect any imminent failure. They did not have any comprehensive plan and not adopted alternative strategy for the success of rebellion. The large numbers of Sikh migrants who participated in the movement lived in make believe-world that their *Khalsa* brethren in Punjab would provide them support and avenge the defeat of *Khalsa* Army by Company's forces in yesteryears battles. It was obvious in lack of any effective preparedness, the movement had to collapse finally.²⁴

²². Khushwant Singh :A History of Sikhs, 2nd Volume 1839-1988:pp, 286-87, OUP, 1991. This incident has become so popular in history of Punjab that it acquire immortality, there are many authentic versions of the story, however this is not related directly to *Ghadar* episode but it was well reported in International press of that period.

²³. A symposium: Ghadar movement and its relevance in national movement of India:pp, 12-13, History Department, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1998. Published in booklet form by Desh Bhakat Society, Jalandhar.

²⁴. *ibid*:pp, 14-15

Ghadarites in Punjab and Dilemma of "Panth": Many *Ghadar* volunteers in mid-1914 sneaked secretly into Punjab to achieve the objective but political situation was far different from their expectations, *firstly*, they hoped general masses especially the peasantry reeling in distress and had anti-British feelings due to agitation against land colonization bill in previous years, they may join them easily. *Secondly*, the urban Sikh gentry may support them as they also may have grievances against the *Raj*. *Thirdly*, soldiers may join them as they might have been influenced by *Ghadarites* nationalist propaganda. The hopes of volunteers were depended on the support of people of Punjab and especially on Sikh masses. The Sikh community in Punjab during pre-war years was influenced by urbanite elites of *Singh Sabhas*, these *Sabhas* sought to assert the distinct community character of Sikhs, they want to purge all so called *Sanatani* practices in Sikhism, their polemics with Arya Samajists, Ahmediyas and Missionaries strengthen their resolve to carve out separate political and religious domain for Sikhs. The one of the main planks of the *Singh Sabhas* was the loyalty towards *Raj*, as they presumed support of British was essential for their separatist agenda. The British, too want to strengthen the loyalty of Sikhs during war years, the enlistment of scores of *Keshdhari Sikhs* into army units support the agenda of *Sabhas*, besides, *Raj* sought to maintain and promote religious orthodoxy among Sikhs to maintain law and order in Punjab. So *Raj*, *Singh Sabhas* and "Chief *Khalsa Diwan*" the highest Sikh temporal body in Punjab act in unison to serve their specific political and religious purposes.²⁵

The *Ghadarites*, who, too in large numbers were Sikhs developed their "*Panthics*" ideology on contrary path from *Singh Sabhas* and *Khalsa Diwan* the interpretation of their faith based on the Sikh community's heritage of Martial traditions, it, sought to inspire from tenth Guru Gobind Singh, who invokes the armed struggle for righteous cause. Besides, it the other source of inspiration were the valor and chivalry of Sikh crusaders like Banda Singh Bahadur, Bhai Deep Singh, Mehtab Singh and Bhai Phula Singh who sacrificed lives for national cause. They also insist on *the* modern literary works of Bhai Vir Singh and Gian Singh which inspire one for the sacrifice for national cause. In general term *Ghadarites*, stress upon popular Sikh practice of *Shadat* or sacrifice for righteous cause, according to this Guru's Singh is distinguished by bravery and martyr's spirit to fight enemy rather than to adherence a ritualistic external form as advocated by orthodox *Singh Sabhas*. So *Ghadarities* rejected particular religious domain for the Sikhs and stated that *Khalsa* of Guru was founded as a force for defense of "*Panth*" and country, more simply time has now ripened for liberation of "*Bharat Mata*" from British rule. This illusion of *Ghadarites* that conditions are conducive for the revolution cost them dearly *firstly*, peasants did not provide any support they helped police in nabbing the volunteers, *secondly*, the volunteers who enter into cantonments also could not get required support from soldiers, *thirdly* in cities, these volunteers were

²⁵ .Randhir Singh and Indu Banga(ed.):Freedom struggle in Punjab, some reflections: pp, 137-38, Punjab University Press, Chandigarh, 1989.

treated as unwelcome guests and seen as conspirators and a threat to general order and peace.²⁶

The *Ghadarites* planned armed revolution with help of sympathetic soldiers stationed in Army units in Punjab cantonments, beigning was to be from Lahore itself, many revolutionaries from Bengal also reached Punjab for assistance, even date was fixed for rebellion as 21st February, 1915, later pre-pone to 19th February, 1915, but secret leaked to authorities in Punjab, active workers were arrested tried under sedition cases, another investigation at California, US, broke the backbone of the movement. Many *Ghadarites* were sentenced to death, others given specific jail terms. The large numbers of Sikh revolutionaries who were the chief members of *Ghadar* Committee, subsequently given death sentences to instill fear among the people generally. There was another aspect which define *Ghadar's* adherence to Sikh martyr traditions had seen in activities of important leaders like Baba sohan singh bhakna who was the staunch believer of Namdhari ideology of militant –religious-political nationalism and used religious symbolism in the movement. The young revolutionary Kartar Singh Sarabha (who was executed at very tender age of 16, later became inspiration for revolutionary Bhagat Singh) invoked the legendary bravery of Sikh warriors of Anglo – Sikh wars for fighting against the British in India.²⁷

So, *Ghadar* movement failed primarily due to many reasons, it could not get support and sympathy of people generally and Sikh masses particularly. The British successfully cracked the plot of *Ghadarites* by help of local police and populace and by an efficient system of espionage. The idea of *Raj's* benevolence was very popular among the masses, the successful propaganda of British countered the religio- nationalist overtones of the *Ghadar* movement. The *Ghadarites* also faced financial difficulties, due to which they committed s dacoits in Punjab to overcome these, popularly called as *Ghadar –di- dacoits*. It made them unpopular in rural areas, many villagers helped local police in apprehending the culprits. The " *Chief Khalsa Diwan*" a loyalist religious body condemn the activities of *Ghadarites* and even ascribed them as "*Patits Sikhs*" or fallen Sikhs and expunged them from community. Moreover, *Mahants* or heads of different *Gurdwaras* in Punjab also disown them describing them as renegade and thugs and appealed to all and sundry not to provide any help or shelter to these volunteers. They were dubbed as the enemies of *Sikh Panth* and admonished and demonize as untrue Sikhs of Gurus. The religious bodies of Sikhs declared their support to British Crown, conform loyalty towards *Raj* and passed resolution against the *Ghadarites* activities and for support of *Raj* in their respective religious gatherings. So during war years the movement was suppressed completely. So, British and *Panthic* party's complicity in disparaging the *Ghadarites* in Punjab's politics resulted in failure, another aspect

²⁶.ibid:pp, 140-42.

²⁷ .ibid:pp, 145-46.

contributed to failure of movement, the political environment of in India was far from conducive for such action. Nationalism was in infant stage, anti-imperialist feelings yet to developed, even Congress a nationalist organization was sympathetic to the cause of war in hope of political concessions as promised by the British.²⁸

Jallinwala Bagh Massacre and the "PANTH" politics in Punjab: Aftermath failure of *Ghadar* movement, there was lull in politics of Punjab. The Great War ended with victory of allies on November, 1918. The after- affect of war felt in India, the influenza epidemic which spread after war years had devastating impact, more than a million Indians lost lives and in Punjab twenty thousand deaths were reported but fortunately by December –January, 1918 epidemic subsided and life resorted to normal. Then the wave of economic slump hit the markets the inflation soars, manufacturing decline and life become difficult for the commons but people in Punjab were still hopeful of good days ahead. The Sikhs masses in particular, in spite of economic difficulties were loyalist to the Raj, the successful recruitment of Sikhs in Army during war years was one of the major achievement of the *Raj*, it provided boost to loyalist relations between *Raj* and Sikhs. *The Khalsa Diwan* too show the positive gesture celebrated the victory day in many *Gurudwaras* of Punjab and conduct "*Akhand Patth*" for the providence of *Raj* and Sikhs. The Punjab administration under Governor" Michael' O' Dwyer" celebrated the victory day in December, 1918, at Lahore with much enthusiasm and fanfare, banquets were thrown open for important dignitaries. In assembly hall the Governor delivered his thanksgiving speech, he hailed the cooperation of all communities in war efforts, and stated benevolence of *Raj* would bring peace and prosperity in Punjab. He was unaware of the fact that within span of two- or three-months catastrophic events may disrupt peace in India generally and in Punjab particularly.²⁹

The political environment in India in, 1919 was surcharged by introduction of *Rowallt- Bill* and entry of Gandhi in politics. Gandhi launched his first all India movement against the bill namely-*Rowallt –Satyagraha*, it was to be non- violent struggle, response in Punjab was tremendous, the call for strike in Delhi on 30th March, 1919 met by violent clashes. The call for general strike in Punjab was fixed for 9th April, 1919, this call received massive support in cities of Lahore, Amritsar, Ferozpur, Multan and Ambala a complete strike was observed, all major communities showed solidarity and unity with *Satyagraha* movement. The Punjab administration become nervous with success of movement. On 9th of April, 1919 there was much disturbance in city of Lahore and Amritsar, unity of communities pose serious challenge to British such show of communal amity may endangered the future of Raj. The young Governor of Punjab

²⁸ .Jagjit Singh: Samkaleen Punjab ka Itihas(Hindi):pp, 89-90, Navyug Prakashan, New delhi, 2000.

²⁹ .ibid:pp, 95-96.

become impatient at such spontaneity and success of movement, despite, the fact Punjab usually boasted to be best administered and loyalist state of British India.³⁰

The Governor imposed Martial Law in Amritsar and Lahore, to maintain law and order, the civil administration was overtaken by military authorities under Martial law administrator, General Dwyer. On 10th April, 1919 two popular leaders of Punjab, Dr. Satyapal and Saifuddin Kitchlew were detained to dampen the spirit of movement but atrocities continued even peaceful demonstrators on many places were injured in unprovoked firing by Army. It resulted in more disturbances at many places. The continuation of violence, led to uneasiness in Congress, the local branch instruct to people and Government to keep restrain and, appealed to stop the violence. However, on 13th April, auspicious day of Baishkhi, a general meeting was called upon by a local sabha to oppose the detention of the two leaders at Jallinwala Bagh, a narrow park near Golden Temple Complex. However, prohibitory orders were in place but many Sikh pilgrims out of curiosity entered into meeting without knowing of political context of the meeting. General Dwyer entered the park and ordered shooting on unarmed civilians without warning. In this massacre more than 400 persons were killed and around 1000 were injured, there was outrage at massacre throughout the country, Gandhi finally called off the *Satyagraha* movement without achieving any result.³¹

The reaction against massacre was very sporadic in Punjab, condemnation came from all section of society. The local press was full of criticism, even mouthpiece of liberal-loyalist *Singh Sabhas* organs like *Khalsa –Akhbar* and *Khalsa Advocate* carried out adverse articles against the *Raj*. *The Tribune*, *Punjabee Akhbar* and other vernaculars papers also criticized the Government and describe the incident as unparalleled in history and even some Punjabi newspapers compared the incident with *Ghallugharas* (Holocaust) of Medieval period and sacrilege the Government, as a result more than 45 English language and vernaculars newspapers were proscribed and censorship promulgated to suppress hatred against the Government.³²

Soon, within a month momentum associated with *Rowallt Satyagraha* subsided. The government announced inquiry into Punjab disturbances and publish, its, as *Hunter Committee Report*, it absolve all the charges against Punjab Government and blamed Congress for its unnecessary proactive movement. Meanwhile, Congress also publish its enquiry committee report, having divergent views than government report. The Congress's report blamed high handedness of government officials in dealing with situation, it also regretted the attitude of police and other officials in handling with peaceful protestors. The report further delineated the racial intolerance of white officials

³⁰ .V.N.Dutta, Randhir Singh, Indu Banga(ed.):A History of Freedom Struggle in Punjab:pp, 194-95, Punjab University, Chandigarh, 1988

³¹ .ibid:pp, 201-02.

³² .ibid:pp, 204-05

towards the general Indians and condemn the unnecessary military action against peaceful meeting at Jallinwala Bagh, it proposed to take matter in Parliament for necessary action against Governor of Punjab and recall of General Dwyer and constitute court of inquiry against him.³³

The attitude of Sikh religious organizations in dealing with situation was ambivalent, the Sikhs associated with Congress and local Sabhas including some eminent members of society severely condemn the Government's attitude and describe the Jallianwala Bagh massacre as unparalleled in British India. But most disturbing was loyalist posture of "*Khalsa Diwan*" it never publicly condemn the Jallianwala Bagh incident and grim events of *Satygraha* days, this attitude of *Panthic* body create confusion among supports of body. After two months on initiatives of "*Khalsa Diwan*" General Dwyer, was honored by the *Panthic* body, it facilitated the Dwyer and initiated him as true Sikh of Guru. It was really very strange overture of *Panthic* body, the numbers of person killed or injured in Jallianwala Bagh were members of Sikh community and most of them were from rural regions of Punjab who supposed to be staunch supporter of "*Khalsa Diwan*".³⁴

There were many divergent views about the nature of gathering at Bagh in vernacular-Punjabi press, some organs of Sikh religious organizations wrote it was general impression that crowd at Bagh had not any political motive, most of them were curious onlookers who happen to be at Golden Temple for Baikashi festival sneaked into there by chance, they had no idea about why meeting was organized, who were the leaders for whose release the meeting held, they were killed accidentally by Dwyer's unexpected action but most of them were certainly Sikh pilgrims of nearby regions of Amritsar and Lahore. The matter remained in lime- light for few weeks, the debate ensued whether these sufferers be given martyr status among Sikh religion or not, but within short span of time, matter died down due to reverbrances of next Gandhian movement. However, Congress's enquiry committee report which was highly critical of Government's role and acts of violence by police and army, but it was not critical of "*Khalsa Diwan's*" posture of facilitation of General Dwyer. In reality Gandhi and Congress did not want to alienate the *Panthic* body, as its moral and political support was critical in anti- British struggle especially in Punjab. This stand was fruitful for Congress during Non- Cooperation and *Gurudwara* reform movement days when Akalis and Congress shared same platform for their respective objectives.³⁵ So, after successful completion of *Gurudwara* reform movement between 1921-25 in Punjab. A new Sikh organization "*SGPC*" or Shrimoni Gurudwara Prabdhank Committee was

³³ .ibid:pp, 211-12.

³⁴ .ibid:214-15. The gesture of the priests at Golden Temple horrified and offended the entire Sikh community by presenting general Dwyer with a *Saropa*-a robe of honor-and by initiating him into *Khalsa* faith. The disgraceful conduct of the priests was generally condemned by the English and Vernaculars press.

³⁵ .Congress enquiry committee report on disturbances in Punjab:pp, 114-15. CWC press, 1920.

formed in 1925, which was granted legal control over upkeep of *Gurdwaras* in Punjab by the Government authorities. The *Akalis*, who successfully led the struggle were now on the forefront of Sikh politics and acquired undisputed leadership of community. The *Akalis* in beginning stages were the keen supporters of Congress and Gandhi, and Gandhi even blessed the *Akalis* by wishing the moral support in their “*Dharm Morchas*” during movement days but after failure of Non -Cooperation and success of their movement, *Akalis* favored the British as compared to Congress and Gandhi. The *Akalis* never took up any stand on the issue of *Ghadar* and Jallianwala Bagh massacre, and did not condemn publicly the Government for it, as they were conscious of favor shown by them during their struggle, so did not want to attract the wrath of Government on the issue. On parallel the, Congress which celebrate victory or *Satygraha week*, every year in Punjab from 6th April to 13th April to commemorate Jallianwala Bagh event also did not took up the cause due to reason of religious sentiments attached to the issue, so political considerations of different parties altogether overlooked the real issue of inclusion of these events in martyrdom or *shadat* traditions of Sikhism.³⁶

Conclusion

The episode shows that during days of British rule in Punjab and afterwards partition and independence of India, there was much controversy regarding the issue of fate of *Ghadar* and Jallianwala Bagh Martyrs, on many occasions Sikh community shows ambivalence on this issue, many arguments were put forwarded that, due to political nature of these movements, these martyrs could not be given the revered status of *Shahids* in Sikh religious history. The second argument which favored the such action stated that these slain volunteers of the movements sacrificed their lives for national cause, which amounts to be equated with *Shahdat* in Sikh traditions. So, finally, by 2003, The Punjab Government after long deliberations of 84 years accepted the Jallinwala Bagh volunteers as Martyrs or *Shahids* of Sikhism. Regarding, *Ghadar* movement after a long crusade and movement by well-wishers of movement, it was decided that, these volunteers who give supreme sacrifice for the cause should also be included in *Shahidi* or martyrdom parlance of Sikhism. The Ghadar movement completed 100 years of its occurrence in 2015, century later, the relevance and significance of movement still echoes in the national freedom struggle of India against the British Imperialism, it became inspiration for later revolutionary movement in India which dominated the conscious's of younger generations in mid-1920's and early 1930's.

³⁶ .ibid:pp.119-20.The Dilemma of Congress indicated that, it plainly reject the views of many volunteers regarding the condemnations of action of Sikh clergy.

